

THE QUIVER

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"A small slight figure, in a picturesque dress"—p. 259.

HIS BY RIGHT.

BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "UNDER FOOT," "JOHN HESKETH'S CHARGE," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLIX.—DR. WARD'S VISITOR.

PHILIS had been terribly startled by the fainting of her master, and now severely blamed herself as the cause. It was the result of the undermining debility which had been following him for months, a stealthy-footed enemy, whose presence was suspected by none, until accident revealed it, and helped to develop it into greater activity. But it was only a temporary prostration, that passed with the following day,

leaving him little altered in appearance, except for a grey shrunken look upon his face, and a general feebleness of gait, as he crept among his musty old books, and took short morning walks with Bessie, who was all tenderness and anxiety for him to get well.

Her master's sudden attack had partially opened the eyes of Philis to the truth, and excited fears which she somewhat thoughtlessly communicated to Bessie, who instantly took the alarm, her solicitude magnifying every trifle into a cause for uneasiness about the old man. On his own part, Lewis Darley had been painfully startled by the fit of faintness which had given such proof of failing power. He took it as a forewarning of the change that was coming, and roused himself to the necessity of setting his worldly affairs in order. His first thought was to satisfy himself on the subject of Gerald Darley, whom he resolved to keep no longer in doubt about his views and wishes respecting himself and Bessie Grant; but before acting on this resolution, he determined to visit Workenbury, and gratify a wish which he had long felt, to see the doctor's daughter, Sylvia Ward, and by personal observation judge for himself whether the young lady was likely to prove a formidable rival to Bessie.

"He has not been to Abbey House so often of late, and I must find out whether it is that girl who is keeping him away from Bessie," murmured the old man, as he sat by the fire in his study a few days afterwards.

His first thought was to ask Bessie to accompany him; his second decided that she was better not to go, as her presence might be a difficulty in the way of a confidential tête-à-tête which he hoped to obtain with Gerald.

So with some fond misgivings on the part of Bessie, and many anxious injunctions for him to take all possible care of himself during his journey, he was suffered to leave Abbey House one chill March morning, Philis presenting herself at the last moment with a muffler for his neck and a third edition of hot spiced drink, which she wished to force upon him as a protection against the cold.

Lewis Darley found himself very cordially received by Dr. Ward, who was startled by the change in his appearance since he had last seen him, only a few months before at Chesterdale. Gerald had been the means of making his uncle acquainted with the doctor, but until this visit he had never been introduced to his domestic circle. His first impression of the doctor's wife was highly flattering to the lady, who exerted herself, not unsuccessfully, to place the guest at his ease. Dinner passed very pleasantly at the doctor's hospitable table, where the viands seemed to have a racy flavour, that made the repast a decided contrast to the gloomy anchorite meals in which the old man was fond of indulging in his own room. The change of scene was like a tonic, and

had the effect of rousing him. But, to his disappointment, Sylvia was not present; she had accompanied some friends to a morning concert, and it was thought they must have persuaded her to stay and dine with them, their house being in the neighbourhood of the concert-hall.

"I wish Sylvia had come back in time to join us at dinner," commented the doctor; "the little puss knows very well that neither her mother nor myself like sitting down without her; but I have noticed that the Winstanleys invariably keep her, and I don't thank them."

Lewis Darley smiled, the doctor saw it and explained, smiling in his turn, "She is our only child, Mr. Darley, and I always feel uneasy when she is from home; you will understand us, for I hear from Gerald how fond you are of Miss Bessie."

The old man's heart warmed at the allusion to Bessie, and he said earnestly, "Yes, I can understand what it is to have one's heart bound up in love for a young life that we have watched from its dawn; can understand also what a blank would be left behind, if such a love were taken from us. Has it ever occurred to you, doctor, to ask how you would bear separation from your daughter—I mean when she marries?"

"I endeavour to keep such thoughts out of my mind, for they are unpleasant," said the doctor, hastily. The question had given him a pang. He was thinking of Sylvia and the unhappy episode of her love for Harold Chadburn.

The old man watched the doctor keenly. He was wondering whether the daughter had formed an attachment for Gerald, and if her father knew it. To him it looked suspicious that both Gerald and the young lady were absent, and the evident wish of Dr. Ward to avoid the subject of his daughter's marriage confirmed the old man in his opinion, that Bessie had a rival in Sylvia Ward.

Mrs. Ward, seeing the conversation was turning upon an unpleasant subject, endeavoured to change it by asking her husband, "When do you expect Mr. Gerald Darley, doctor?"

"Really, my dear, I am unable to say."

"He will not be very late, I presume?"

"No, certainly not."

"Then, my dear, I will take care of Mr. Darley, until you and his nephew return," and turning to the old man, Mrs. Ward added with one of her pleasant smiles, "I dare say, Mr. Darley, you and I will manage to entertain each other without their aid."

Here Dr. Ward apologised for having to leave. "Doctors are not their own masters, Mr. Darley. I have several important cases that I must see to-day."

Lewis Darley interrupted him—"That is enough, Dr. Ward; I want no man to neglect his duty for me; in such matters an apology is unnecessary."

The doctor smiled as he looked at the eccentric old man, and repeated, "Quite right, Mr. Darley."

At that moment they heard the rustle of silk, and the sound of a light tripping step in the passage; the next, the door opened and revealed a most attractive vision. A small slight figure, in a picturesque dress, a face of brilliant gipsy beauty, overshadowed by a raised coronet of dark curls, with a few crimson buds blushing in the midst, giving the picture a gleam of warm colour and a touch of wild grace. Even Lewis Darley, who might be expected to look with cynical eyes, and be ready to revolt against the beauty which he did not want to acknowledge—even he could not repress a feeling of admiration as he gazed. He could almost have fancied that some sylvan queen of the forest had stepped out from a quaint pastoral, to receive the homage of her worshippers. He was recalled by the cheery voice of the doctor introducing his daughter Sylvia, and with a bitter feeling of disappointment he found himself saying under his breath, "So this is Sylvia Ward; no wonder that I had fears about Gerald. I am not surprised that his visits to Abbey House are so rare, for if this little beauty tries to win him, I am afraid even Bessie will have little chance against her. If they were side by side, I should have no fear for Bessie, but that girl has the advantage of seeing him every day. I am glad I have seen her; my next step will be to put a bar between them, by telling Gerald the conditions of my will."

CHAPTER L.

"PLANNED BETWEEN THEM."

CYRIL CHADBURN was not a suitor to be easily discouraged. In spite of Lewis Darley's refusal to enter into any business transactions, and his marked avoidance of him (for there was only one inference to be drawn from the inevitable denial that awaited him, whenever he called at Abbey House with the professed intention of obtaining an interview), Cyril was not to be turned aside from his purpose. He determined to succeed in the face of every obstacle, and if possible conquer the old man's prejudice against him.

Time passed without advancing him one step towards his purpose. It was in vain that he managed to wring from his haughty mother, certain concessions towards the people of Abbey House, for the invitations which he prevailed on her to send, were declined in a note dictated by a high-bred courtesy that surprised her ladyship, who from that time was conscious of a feeling of respect towards the eccentric proprietor of the forfeited Chadburn lands. There was a sort of mortified pique in her impression of Bessie Grant.

"Who was the girl, that she should presume to hold back from the suit of a Chadburn, and even go so far as to prefer the attentions of her plebeian

cousin, unless, as she was inclined to suspect, it was merely a feminine ruse, to entrap her prize more securely, and make her conquest all the surer! She began to take an interest in the affair, and wondered whether Cyril would succeed in winning the fair prize he coveted so much.

On the day that Lewis Darley paid his visit to Workenbury, Cyril Chadburn chanced to see him at the Chesterdale railway-station, and showed his anxiety to conciliate the old man, who, being in a hurry to catch the train which was rapidly approaching the station, took no notice of the ceremonious bow, a slight that made Cyril's pale face redden and his smooth brow contract as he turned haughtily and watched him. He fancied there was no mistaking the cut, and that he could divine its motive; for he had not failed to discover Lewis Darley's antagonism, and rightly guessed that it was occasioned by a knowledge (how obtained he could not imagine) of his plan to become the possessor of his immense wealth, by making Bessie Grant his wife.

Cyril Chadburn did not leave the station, nor relax his watch upon the old man, until he saw him take his seat as a passenger for Workenbury.

Lewis Darley sat by the window of the carriage, the inevitable walking-stick in his hand, which was resting on the curiously-carved knob, as he meditatively surveyed the animated scene presented by the platform with its hurrying crowd of travellers, a living panorama of shifting faces, representing such varying phases of human life. A poor family, who appeared to be migrating from the town with their worldly belongings, occupied the same carriage, for, as Cyril sneeringly remarked, the old man travelled third class. The family consisted of a man of middle age, who was evidently a mechanic. Then there was his wife, a toilworn, wearied woman, with a graduated scale of children, beginning with a girl of eighteen and ending with a baby of as many months—a fretful wailing mite, who centred in his small person self-assertion enough for the entire family. There was also a grandfather, a blind old man of eighty, to whom the eldest girl visibly clung, for she sat with his wrinkled hand in hers during the journey. Lewis Darley bestowed much interest upon his fellow-passengers, singling out the young girl and the grandfather, possibly because he heard the former's name was Bessie, and he fancied she had some sort of likeness to his own cherished darling.

From where he stood watching them, Cyril only saw the old man and the people who seemed to be engrossing his attention—a poorly-dressed family, presenting a commonplace form of human wretchedness that evoked no sympathy from Cyril. The pathos of the picture was lost upon him. He could not see how deeply Lewis Darley was moved by the sight of the old man and the young girl, and his witness of the bond of love between them—could not hear the low-spoken words of the young girl in

answer to Lewis Darley's query: "Are you going to Workenbury?"

"We are going to America, sir; father cannot get work in England."

"And is that old man going with you?"

"Yes, sir; we could not think of leaving him."

"And he is——"

"My grandfather."

There was such tenderness in the girl's voice as she pronounced the last words, that Lewis Darley thought it sounded remarkably like Bessie's, and he murmured to himself, "So would my darling cling to me if I was poor and weak and helpless like this old man."

All this time the recluse of Abbey House had been fighting a battle with himself—a struggle between the tender instincts of charity that enriched his nature like a vein of gold, and the passion that formed its alloy.

The victory was several golden coins that he had held irresolutely in his hand, and two or three times dropped back into the well-filled pocket, until at last they were silently passed into the brown palm of the aged labourer, whose hardworking day was so far spent—it was an act strangely at variance with the parsimony which had thrown Lewis Darley among such fellow-travellers.

Cyril Chadburn waited until the train steamed out of the station, then hurriedly consulted the time-tables, with reference to the return trains for Chadburn, buttoned his glove with a satisfied air, and went briskly in the direction of the city. The thought had suddenly occurred to him, that with a little management he might possibly turn the old man's absence to account, by trying to obtain an interview with Bessie Grant.

The deep tones of the cathedral bell were vibrating through the drowsy streets and squares clustered under its shadow. The congregation had gathered in for afternoon service. A long line of little choristers with their young faces etherealised by their snowy raiment, had streamed up the nave, and glided off to their places with a soft flutter, like so many white-winged doves. It was at that moment Bessie Grant stole in from the cloister garden, where by permission she had been sketching a portion of the cathedral from that point. So she knelt with her pure face bent meekly on her hands, and her heart lifted reverently in response to the grand old words that seemed to have its own special message of love and promise to every human ear that cared to listen.

When service was over, and the frosty March sunlight was lying bright upon the grass, Bessie was stealing back to the place which she had made an impromptu studio, when she was stopped by the unexpected sight of a gentleman whom she recognised at once. Cyril Chadburn had strolled into the cathedral, and caught sight of Bessie among the congregation. He had called twice at Abbey House,

each time being met by Phoebe, with the curt information that Miss Bessie was out.

Unwilling to leave the neighbourhood until he had been successful, he had hovered about the cathedral, and at last made up his mind to see it in tourist fashion, as a means of killing time. His pertinacity was at last rewarded by a sight of Bessie, and he made up his mind to wait until the service was concluded, for such an opportunity might not occur again for some time.

"Old Darley is bent on keeping her for his nephew, of that I am convinced, yet from the day of the accident to that confounded servant-girl, she has seemed to shun me, and I have noticed a change in her manner; fact is I ought to have gone in and saved the girl, and not let that young doctor cut me out, for she thinks him a hero, while I think that, finding I was on the winning side, it was planned between him and the servant-girl. But she shall be my wife in spite of everything, and I will make her an offer to day—win or lose."

CHAPTER LI.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

GREATLY to his disappointment, Lewis Darley had no opportunity for private talk with Gerald, whom he only saw for a few moments, when he hurried in to consult Dr. Ward professionally upon an important case which required immediate attendance.

Unfortunately, Dr. Ward had not returned; and the old man heard Gerald say to Sylvia, "Not returned yet; I am sorry to hear it, for I just met a messenger from Grove House, and he tells me that old Mr. Price has had a relapse, and they are afraid he is dying; so I have not a moment to stay. Will you ask your father to follow me as soon as possible?"

He was about to hurry off, when Sylvia exclaimed, "Stay a minute, Mr. Darley; I have a message for you. Your uncle is in the next room, and wishes to see you."

"Bless me! you don't say so!" and he rushed out, leaving Sylvia to follow.

The uncle and nephew had only time to exchange a few brief sentences.

"I'm so sorry, uncle," said the young man, breathlessly, as they shook hands—"so sorry that I cannot stay; but there is nothing wrong at Abbey House, I hope?"

"Nothing, Gerald, nothing."

"I am glad to hear it. Then business has brought you to Workenbury, uncle?"

"I have come purposely to see you."

"Dear me! how unfortunate that you should choose this particular day for your visit!"

"Yes, Gerald, it is unfortunate; but as it is only an old man's whim, what I have to say must wait at least for a day or two. Perhaps you will try and run

down to Abbey House; for I wish to have a long talk with you on an important subject."

"I will try, uncle; but I must say good-bye now. How is Bessie? Does she take the tonic I prescribed?"

"Yes, I believe so; and I think she is better; whether it is to be placed to the credit of your tonic I cannot tell."

"You are not looking well, uncle; what have you been doing with yourself?" remarked Gerald, as he gave the old man's hand a final shake, and adroitly felt his pulse at the same time, adding rather seriously, "I must try and see you one day this week. But no; delays are dangerous—you had better tell me how you feel, uncle; I shall consider you in the light of a new patient."

"Well, my boy, I must acknowledge that I'm not quite the thing; yet I do not feel ill, so you need not look so serious about it."

"Tell me exactly how you feel, uncle."

"Well, I've a strange sort of weakness that I've fought with for some time—a tired feeling—and I keep going to sleep against my will; that is one reason why I came to see you. I thought I should like to have things set in order, for there's no telling what might happen."

Gerald looked anxiously at the old man, as he again carefully examined his pulse. The young doctor then hurried into the surgery, and a few minutes later came out bearing a bottle of medicine, which he handed to Lewis Darley.

"I think that will do you good, uncle;" then, with a hasty farewell, he left the house. So it was that Lewis Darley went back to Chesterdale, no better for his journey, except that he had seen Sylvia Ward, and become one of Gerald's patients.

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"You cannot mean that for your final answer, Miss Grant."

"I can give you no other, Mr. Chadburn."

Bessie's low voice was broken with agitation, and her sweet face full of distress. The interview with Cyril was trying her sorely, for she believed she was giving pain, and her sensitive nature shrank from the thought.

Instead of resuming her sketching, she took her way slowly back towards Abbey House, Cyril walking by her side and pleading his suit as he had never ventured to plead before. As he had predetermined, he took the decisive step, and told the story of his love, told it in true lover-like language, with much persuasive grace of manner and soft intonations, so tenderly modulated as to make the most of a voice of wonderful flexibility, into which he could throw such mellow music when he pleased. This was one of Cyril Chadburn's attractions—one which he usually found all powerful in his favour whenever he chose to exert it. But that day he watched in vain for the signs which he was longing to see. He knew that

her heart did not respond—that the love-words, which the Honourable Katherine Appleby would have drunk in so greedily, had no tender meaning for her. They were evidently listened to without any sign, not the least demonstration that could be translated as a symptom of yielding, and he had been trying to persuade himself that she cared for him.

When they stopped before the gate of Abbey House, he had made a proposal which had been gently but firmly refused. Yet he made up his mind to persevere in the face of every obstacle. Perhaps the difficulty of gaining the prize enhanced its value to him.

If Bessie had been acting under the influence of the most consummate coquetry, she could not have devised anything more effectual for the completion of her conquest of Cyril.

"Even though you deny me, I cannot give you up, Miss Grant. I have waited twelve months to tell you of my love, I will wait twelve more if you will only give me some hope to look forward to in the end."

There was no mistaking her tone of distress, as she said, "I cannot Mr. Chadburn, indeed I cannot; don't ask me, please don't ask me. I am sorry to give you pain, but I cannot dissemble, I must tell you—"

"Tell me what?" he asked eagerly.

"That I could not care for you in the way you want."

"Let me try and win your love, Miss Grant."

"Oh, Mr. Chadburn! it is cruel of you to talk like that."

"Pardon me, Miss Grant, I am sorry to hear you say that, for I could not be cruel to you, I only ask permission to take my chance among others."

"It is useless asking it, Mr. Chadburn, it would be wrong of me to do so, for I should be only giving you a false hope."

Cyril's face flushed, for he saw it was useless contending any further. As she left him he said, with a slight pressure of the hand, "I shall not despair yet, Miss Grant; true love rarely runs smooth, and mine is no exception to that rule."

He stood watching until the gate closed upon her, then strode away after a glance at the grim face over the archway, which looked to him uglier than ever, for it seemed to be mocking his defeat.

Before he left the square, he turned and looked at the old house, muttering to himself, "My first suspicion was true, she is in love with that conceited prig of a doctor, and I owe my refusal to him. The girl is making me love her in real earnest. If I could only do something that would divide them—anything, I care not what, so that it effected their separation. I have said I shall not despair, and I mean it; a woman's nay to day may be yes to-morrow. That man shall never be her husband if I can hinder it, and I will."

(To be continued.)

"THIS YEAR ALSO."*

"Lord, let it alone this year also."—Luke xiii. 8.



PREACHER like our Lord Jesus Christ could not fail to attract hearers and to awaken their deepest interest. So perfectly did he know the wants and workings of the human heart—so graphic are his descriptions, and so true to life—so simple and familiar his language—so wisely did he adapt himself to persons and circumstances, and such a perfect master was he of the art of speaking to the heart—so tender and sympathising, that one cannot wonder at the listening multitudes everywhere testifying with profoundest admiration that "never man spake like this man."

What an inimitable specimen of instructive warning is this parable! So simple, that a child can understand it; so concise, that to take away a word involves a loss of force and beauty; and yet so lucid in its teaching, so rich in suggestion, and so perfect every way, that there is danger lest any attempt to enforce its application should make it weak, and to explain its meaning should make it obscure.

Hear the parable:—"A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

The main lessons of the parable may be comprehended within these three divisions:

I. The fig-tree itself, which the owner found planted in the vineyard. II. The growing dissatisfaction he experienced with it, and his threatening of summary destruction. III. The intercession made for a merciful respite, and the engagement for still greater effort to make it fruitful.

I have no doubt that by the "fig-tree planted in his vineyard" the Lord meant the Jewish people, whom he selected from other nations, and distinguished with unexampled privileges and special care. The continued unbelief and ever-increasing ungodliness of that favoured nation are symbolised under the figure of the barrenness of this fig-tree. By the intercessor, who pleads that it may be spared awhile, and plied with still more stimulating agencies, the Lord meant the signal efforts made by himself and the apostles to bring the people to repentance and faith. And the consent given to

cut the fig-tree down in case of further disappointment, is the final admonition to the Jewish people that they were on their last trial, with a fearful retribution hanging over them in case of their continued unbelief.

Contented with having thus stated what I believe to be its primary interpretation, I wish now to bring the parable home to ourselves, and to show how exactly it is adapted to our position on entering upon a new year.

In contemplating the fig-tree planted in the vineyard, I see the image of myself, and not myself only, but of every one of us, whom God, the Great Proprietor of all, has placed under circumstances favourable for cherishing spiritual life, and growth, and fruitfulness. It is good and profitable to think of this, at the opening of the year; and yet I knew not how to enumerate the various religious helps and advantages which God in great mercy has accumulated upon us, to make us wise unto salvation. Perhaps we may see it by contrast.

When I think of the position of other countries, some where the Bible, and the salvation the Bible reveals, are alike utterly unknown; others in which the Bible is prohibited to the people, or misinterpreted by its teachers, and its true meaning lost; when I think how Sundays elsewhere are spent half in business and half in pleasure; when I think of other countries as to Gospel ministrations—some that have never heard the way of salvation at all, and others where salvation by the Son and Spirit of God is mystified by a vain philosophy, or concealed from the worshippers beneath the veil of highly-wrought ceremonial, and when I well know how immensely difficult it must be under such circumstances to find the way of peace with God through Christ and walk therein, and when I compare their hindrances with your helps—their forced ignorance with your open Bible—their Sabbath desecration with your Sundays all your own, to spend as God meant them to be spent—their unprofitable services with yours, calculated to instruct and awaken, warn and invite, reprove and encourage and comfort—services which God blesses with the unmistakable tokens of his presence—when I think of your possessing such spiritual advantages and helps, immensely superior to others,—then I say, the fig-tree planted in the vineyard is an expressive emblem of what God has done thus far for you.

The Owner justly expects fruit from that fig-tree—fruit, the organic produce of the tree and the evidence of its inner life. "And he came and sought fruit thereon." He was not content with

* This paper—which was the last New Year's Day sermon preached by the late Rev. W. B. Mackenzie—the Editor is enabled to give to his readers, through the kindness of the family of his late and valued friend.

making inquiry, or sending some one to bring him information, but he went himself, and searched among the leaves, so that he could not fail to discover it, if fruit were there.

Nor is it any kind of fruit that will serve. It must be good fruit—fruit meet for repentance—fruit unto holiness—fruit of the Spirit,—that we should live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world—fruit worthy of God—trust and love and reverence for God—a heartfelt satisfaction in his presence—an absolute surrender of ourselves, both body and soul to him—obedience to him in daily conduct—communion with Christ, and daily endeavours to walk in the blessed steps of his most holy life—diligence in doing good to others—much patience in suffering, and an undeniable determination, day by day, to please God in all things, great or small—this is the kind of fruit for which he searches, and in which God is glorified.

But in these just and reasonable expectations the owner of the vineyard was disappointed. This part of the parable derives graver solemnity, if you call to mind the incident of the barren fig-tree by the wayside. Jesus saw it at a distance, with its ostentatious foliage. He went up to it in his hunger, to see if haply he might find fruit thereon; but found none.

And in like manner he comes here to us, seeking fruit. To him "all hearts are open, all desires known; from him no secrets are hid." Man looks at the outward appearance; God looks direct at the heart. We form our opinions on the evidence of others. He "needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man." He comes among you at church, seeking the fruit of spiritual worship; he comes into your homes, and marks your duties there, as parents, children, masters, servants; sees how you receive your home mercies and home trials; he comes to your places of business, to investigate your dealings between man and man; he comes to you in health and sickness; when you are oppressed with sorrow, and when joyful at heart, always, everywhere, seeking for fruit. And yet there are times when he pays special visits to the soul, and seeks even more earnestly for fruit, and this new birth of the year is surely one of these. He is now present here, and as he passes round, looking at each heart, and knowing the every-day doings of each one's life, he sees your serious looks, indicating thoughtfulness—perhaps regret that the past year has not been spent to better purpose; here a sigh may escape some troubled heart, a silent tear may there steal down the cheek, or a secret prayer may tremble upon the lip, asking for mercy and grace to help. But are these the fruits of the Spirit that satisfy the Lord? I cannot tell; they are blossoms, hopeful and promising, but whether they will

ripen into the fruit of believing hearts and holy lives, or whether they will die away as many such early beginnings have died away, as yet I cannot tell. "He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none."

The owner's disappointment is followed by a serious remonstrance with the vine-dresser. He points significantly to this one tree; this is not, he intimates, the first time he is come to it seeking fruit, nor the second. "*These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none.*" Each visit ended in disappointment. "*These three years.*" Then is it so that God keeps an exact account of his dealings with us, and ours with him? So many years, so many religious services, so many providential events—some rich in mercy, some solemn and weighty in warning; and then does he intimate that these visits are repeated time after time—that warnings are followed by mercies, and mercies followed by warnings, and this continued year after year? How many years is it since he came the first time to you, and sought fruit, and found none? Three years is a long time to continue fruitless; but he has come and dealt with some of you about eternal things for more than three years. And he is come once again this year, and is present beside you; and, now in the presence of Christ himself, and in the presence of angels, and of spirits made perfect, and in the presence perchance of your own kindred, he pronounces this solemn judgment: "*These three years have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*"

These are serious things. But when I read of this fig-tree, which had long stood in a rich and fertile soil, where everything was done that could be done to make it a fruit-bearing tree, and yet to no purpose, that each visit the owner paid was another disappointment, until, despairing of any change, he gave orders to have it cut down—when I read all this, I ask myself, Are there no barren fig-trees now? Are there none in whom as yet no signs of life are discernible? Bear with me if I press the inquiry.

If outward devotion and the reverent observance of sacred duties were the fruit which is looked for, then the Great Owner of all would find fruit here. But he looks for other fruit than that. He looked for it years ago, but found none then; and you promised, if he would spare you another year, you would make him some better return. Again the time came round for another search for fruit, but none could be found even then. And now he is come again, with a more serious remonstrance and a sterner look. "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

Two causes of dissatisfaction are here brought

out; it was useless—it had no fruit. Various means had been tried—invitations, warnings, afflictions, mercies—still no fruit; godly examples, gentle influences, persuasive entreaties, severe rebukes—still no fruit. All the events of these years minutely remembered; every mercy, every invitation, every awakened feeling, every whisper of the still small voice, every solemn reproof, every trial, blessing, comfort, sorrow—he remembers them all. They are all messages from God to thee; and he looks for results, but looks in vain. “He found none.” He is justly dissatisfied.

But there is another reason. Do you think that a man who is surrounded with religious advantages, and stands before the world with the form and profession of a Christian man, while all the time his religion is a mere show—a pretence—is that man only injuring himself?—is he doing no harm to others? Harm! No man can calculate the extent of mischief that such a one produces. I have known men so disgusted with the hollow profession of others—so mortally offended by seeing their Sunday religion contradicted by their weekday ungodliness—that they have cast off the very name of Christ, and disowned all participation in religious profession, which they saw so grievously outraged. Such a one is an immense stumbling-block in the way of young inquirers. He blights the beginnings of a good work in their souls; he discourages and grieves Christian people; he makes God’s enemies to blaspheme; he puts the strongest arguments into the mouth of the infidel. I do not wonder if short work is made of a barren tree like this, and the Great Owner commands, “Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?”

“Not just yet. Bring the axe, if you will. Lay it there on the ground close by; lay it at the root—let him see how perilous his position is. Convince him that this incorrigible barrenness will be tolerated no longer.” Is it a heartbroken parent pleading for an ungodly son? “Lord, let him alone this year also.” Is it a minister interceding for some of his people that hitherto have repelled every invitation, and rushed into deeper guilt? It may be. I am sure that husbands, and wives, and parents, and ministers do plead with God to suspend his righteous judgments for another year.

But in this entreaty I hear the voice of another Intercessor, who feels for sinners more deeply than any earthly friend can feel. It is the same voice that interceded for the greatest sinners that ever rebelled against the majesty of heaven—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Yes, it is the same voice that was once stifled in tears, as he beheld a city plunging into ruin. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,

and ye would not!” It is the same voice, still pleading on thy behalf, “Lord, let it alone this year also.” Many years are gone already, and he is no better—there are no signs of fruit; still bear with him a little longer—just this year; I ask no more. Give him twelve months’ respite; add fifty-two more weeks to the sum of his wasted days; lay the axe aside for this specific time; “let it alone this year also.”

The vine-dresser saw that another year’s trial would be wasted unless some special means were taken to bring the tree to life and fertility. He promises this shall be done; the year granted in mercy shall be a year of special dealings.

First, he observes the earth binds the tree too closely. This he will remove—“I will dig about it.” And sure I am that this is one of the great causes of the spiritual barrenness of our people. The things of this world lie too close to the heart. “Oh yes,” you say, “I am as much convinced of the utter and solemn necessity of seeking first the kingdom of God, as you are. I listen to these appeals Sunday after Sunday, and my heart responds to them all as true; but I am so surrounded with the cares and anxieties of life—my business matters are so absorbing—I am so worried every day, that my Sunday resolutions are all dispelled by the storms of weekday care.” It is too true. But the gracious Master, who sees your vain struggles after better things, engages that he will remove the hindrance. “I will loosen his roots—I will dig about him—and leave him shaking and, as he thinks, ready to fall. And I will surround him with new influences. The Word shall be preached with more fervour, and heavier blows shall be laid upon his conscience; friends shall warn, encourage, invite; conscience shall awake from her drowsy torpor; disappointment shall show him the vanity of life; sickness shall invade his dwelling; Death shall come with grisly looks and bony hand, and shake his dart over the man’s head, and break up his dreams of peace and safety. Let clouds overhang his sky; let his plans in life turn to failure, and the wheels of his earthly career run heavily. Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.”

“And if it bear fruit, well.” Well, for the owner of the vineyard—well for the vine-dresser, whose care and trouble will be at last repaid—well for the vineyard: it will be adorned and enriched, where it was encumbered before—well for the tree itself, to escape the doom of barrenness and obtain the blessing.

“If it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” It is the last trial. Everything turns on the result of this respite and these special means. “If not”—if no fruit appears when this one year is over, then no other means are to be used. The time is gone; Divine patience



(Drawn by JOHN LAWSON.)

"They sang it undismayed"—p. 266.

is exhausted; no other voice will ever be heard to intercede; everything has been done that could be done; even the gracious Saviour himself consents; it must be so; "if it bear fruit, well; but if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down."

The parable ends abruptly. The last scene of the drama is omitted. The result of this intercession and of this fresh agency is passed over in silence. But the parable finds its application in many hearts here to-night. Many are beginning the new year without God. You have long had many religious privileges. Every New Year's Day has God come again looking for fruit; for ten years—for twenty—thirty—forty—for fifty years—looking again and again, and yet found none. Many during the past year have been cut down;

some less careless, less guilty, less addicted to evil than you. They are cut down; you are spared. Perhaps this is the very year which the vine-dresser has besought for you. Perhaps he said, "Oh! spare him yet this one year, and if he does not repent and believe now, then, after that, I will never say another word for him." On this revolution of time—these ensuing twelve months—your eternal interests may be suspended. God grant that you may begin now to seek the Lord, and find forgiveness in him, before to-morrow's stream of worldly things again sets in! Then, safe in Christ, the lapse of years but brings you nearer the heavenly home, and if the heart and flesh fail, 'God is the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.'

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.



WEET rose the hymn and solemn
Above the prison walls;
It made the midnight dungeon
More glad than Caesar's halls:
The younger one's were Silas's,
And the deep bass was Paul's.

Still upward through the midnight
That wondrous anthem strayed—
Through silence and through darkness
They sang it undismayed—
And in the shock of earthquake
They two were not afraid.

But since that midnight anthem
Have ages rolled away,
And bursts of praise gone upward
From martyrdom and fray:
And hymns have lightened breaking hearts,
Till now 'tis near the day!

In two poor cottage chambers,
Just leaving life's annoy,
Were two for whom the valley
Of death was lit with joy:
And one had battled long with years—
The other was a boy.

'Twas night; and o'er the watchers
The awful rush had past
That heralds the death-angel—
The boy was sinking fast.
Hark! was that sound from heaven,
Or was it on the blast?

Is it the wailing angels
With music in their tread?
No! soft and sweet and solemn,
It comes from yonder bed,
Where lay in mortal weakness
Till now, a dying head.

He could not speak this morning—
'Tis midnight, and he sings!
Only a little longer—
One hour to wait! the wings
Unseen have borne him upward
To praise the King of kings.

'Tis night again—and, listen!
Whence comes that other song?
'Tis not the choir of Christmas
Whose tones the strain prolong:
But Christ's invisible angels
Around the singer throng.

She lies in pain and weakness
In yon poor lonely room,
But Jesus speaketh to her,
And Heaven lights its gloom:
She *must* begin the anthem
That peals beyond the tomb.

The quivering nerves are harpstrings!
The Spirit's breath is balm!
Deeper than earthly anguish
Sink Jesus' word of calm:
And breath and strength are given
To sing one glorious psalm.

O living tides of glory
That set so strong in death!
O flames that sweep in music
Lit only by His breath!
Blest is the lowly watcher
To Christ that openeth!

And whensoe'er He cometh
Who sends these signs of might,
In death or in the earthquake,
Or in the clouds of night—
Oh, may it be with singing
That we shall meet His sight!

ALESSIE BOND.

INDIAN NOTES AND ANECDOTES.—III.

BY THE REV. S. MATEER, F.L.S.

ANECDOTES OF ELEPHANTS.



N traversing the streets of Trevandrum, one often meets trained elephants engaged in various labours in the service of the native Government, who maintain a large stud of these huge beasts, and keep them at work in various parts of the country. Their principal duty is to drag heavy logs of timber, a strong rope being secured to the log, and the end of the rope gripped by the elephant between its powerful teeth. There is, however, necessarily great waste of power in this mode of pulling, so that of late years proper timber-carts with large wheels have been introduced, to which the animals are harnessed. These elephants are also occasionally hired for the day by natives to add to the display in their wedding processions.

Horses being thrown into agonies of terror at the sight of these colossal creatures with their broad flapping ears, enormous trunks, and black skin, the elephant-keepers are required, wherever practicable, to turn the animals off the road or up a side street, till persons driving a carriage, or riding on horseback, have safely passed by. The timidity of my pony once produced a curious accident which occurred to me, and which led to the only occasion on which I am aware of having prostrated myself before an idol in India! I was riding rapidly through a rather narrow passage in the Fort, where there stood a great stone elephant, carved in black granite, and placed, like a sentinel, almost in the centre of the path. I well knew my pony's aversion to real live elephants, but thought I was quite safe on this occasion, and that he would make no objection to passing a mere stone elephant. But I had mistaken; he did object, and came to a dead stop within a few yards of the image. In an instant I was over his head, and sprawling on the ground in front of the idol, performing what the Hindoos call *sashtāṅgam*—prostration with the eight members, or on all fours, as we say in English. No wonder that the Brahmans standing by seemed amazingly to enjoy the temporary discomfiture of the missionary in presence of their idol, and they would no doubt repeat the incident as a striking proof of its power.

Elephants abound in a wild state in the mountains of Travancore, where numbers are trapped in large pitfalls every year, and after six or twelve months' training, are brought by degrees to liberty and work. When shot or found dead, ivory being a royalty, the tusks and teeth must be handed over to Government. They are now, however, beginning to be somewhat less numerous, being driven back by the extension of coffee-plant-

ing on the mountain-slopes, where the forests have been cut down; so that orders have been issued for the preservation of valuable "game" of this kind from the attacks of sportsmen, except in special cases where life or property is threatened.

The wild elephants roam about to feed at night, and appear quite to enjoy "a lark," such as pulling down a house and scattering the materials, or walking over and through it. I remember seeing the "lines," or row of huts occupied by labourers on a coffee-plantation, through which a herd of elephants had walked on the preceding night, without any intimation of their coming, and without a single word of apology. No one, happily, was injured, and though the poor men sleeping inside were astonished and terribly frightened at their strange midnight visitors, they were thankful to escape with their lives.

Under these circumstances, the hill people are compelled to build their huts in the tops of the forest trees, where they shall be secure from the attacks of elephants and tigers, *et hoc genus omne*. I have seen these "castles in the air," though, being of a style of build better suited for walking on solid ground than clambering up trees or living on their branches, I never cared to venture up the rude bamboo ladders. In Moffat's "South Africa" there is an engraving of a large tree with several huts on the wide-spreading branches. How much more appropriate, as it appears to me, would be such an address as "The Pines," "The Cedars," or at least "The Mangoes," or "The Tamarinds," issuing from these aerial dwellings than from those pretty villas so designated in the vicinity of London! Some of these huts are mere posts of observation, where a boy or man is set to keep watch at night over the plantations, and scare off the wild elephants, deer, and hogs, by the most hideous cries and noises he can make. I have often, when sleeping in these localities, been disturbed by their bawling at night.

It is well known that solitary, or "rogue" elephants, are extremely vicious, making a point of attacking all passers by. There is reason to suppose that they have been banished from "society" for some notorious crime or incurable vice. Two years ago, one of these dangerous animals was wandering about the Assambu mountain, where one of our Christian people was killed by it. There were four native Christians residing at Nagercoil, who had been engaged by a planter for the erection of a house on his estate up in the hills. These men used to come down on Saturdays to their own homes, returning to work on Monday

morning. One Saturday they started together as usual, but had not gone far when this ferocious brute rushed out of the forest upon them. They ran, and did not venture to look back till they had gone a long distance from the spot. When they collected their senses they found that one of their number was missing. Hastening to the nearest chapel, they called some of the Christians, and, going back to search for their comrade, soon discovered the body of the unfortunate man crushed and mangled by the savage brute. I understand that this elephant killed seven or eight people afterwards, but have not heard whether he was at length destroyed.

There was, some years ago, a trained elephant in Travancore, whose keeper was accustomed to call daily at an arrack-shop in passing, giving the elephant a little of the spirits each time, both being "fond of a drop." One day the beast was refractory, and the keeper, much displeased, threatened that he would stop his allowance of arrack. Shortly afterwards, calling at the shop as usual, he brought out the arrack in a dish, drank the whole before the eyes of the animal, and returned the vessel. The elephant, highly incensed, struck the keeper with his trunk, but so heavy was the blow that the man was killed on the spot. Perceiving what he had done, the sagacious, and on the whole affectionate creature, exhibited

marks of the deepest grief, roaring and crying like a child over the corpse, and fondling it, and was with much difficulty ultimately led away.

One of the most striking illustrations I have ever heard of the extraordinary sagacity of the elephant is related in Pettitt's work on the Tinnevely Mission. It runs somewhat as follows:—While the large chapel at Nagercoil was building, the missionaries obtained the loan of a trained elephant for drawing the larger timber used in its erection. The late Mrs. Mault kindly saw the animal regularly fed, lest the food should be stolen by the attendant. One day the allowance of rice seemed very deficient in quantity, and the good lady expostulated on the subject with the keeper. Raising his hands to heaven, the man loudly, and with great apparent earnestness and sincerity, repudiated the idea of his having taken any of the rice. "Do you think, madam, that I would be capable of doing such a thing? No, never! no more than I would deprive my own children of their daily food." While he was speaking and gesticulating, the intelligent creature, slyly extending his trunk, unfasted the man's waistcloth, thereby spilling out the missing rice, which had been concealed in a corner of the cloth, and exposing the dishonesty of the attendant. I have been assured of the authenticity of this anecdote by Mrs. Mault herself.

OUR ENGLISH BIBLE.

I.—THE EARLIER VERSIONS.



At the present day, when a revision of the English Bible has been undertaken in influential quarters, it may be interesting to the reader to know something of the history of previous translations of the Scriptures into our native tongue. It appears, indeed, that from a very early period our Saxon ancestors were in possession of some portions at least of the Bible in their vernacular language, though we cannot now ascertain the date at which the first of these translations appeared. The earliest of which we have any authentic record was a Saxon version of the Psalms, made by Adhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, about A.D. 706, which is supposed to have subsequently perished in the Danish wars. Shortly afterwards the four Gospels were translated into Saxon by Egbert, Bishop of Lindisferne, the manuscript of which is deposited in the British Museum; and a few years later the Venerable Bede—a man of great erudition for the times—similarly translated other portions of the Scriptures. At the time of his death, A.D. 735, he was employed in translating the Gospel of St. John;

but there is no evidence that he made a Saxon version of the whole of the sacred volume, as has sometimes been asserted. Such does not appear to have existed in Saxon times, though various other individuals made translations of different portions. Of these the best known were King Alfred, who translated the Psalms into Saxon for his own use; and Elfric, Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 995, who translated the Pentateuch and several portions of the historical books of the Old Testament. But besides these earlier versions, others (of which manuscripts still exist in various libraries) were made from time to time up to and during the transition period when Saxon was becoming what we now call English. It was from one of these manuscripts, now in the Bodleian Library, that Foxe, the martyrologist, prepared a Saxon edition of the Gospels in 1571, under the patronage of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury. As the result of the collation of a number of other manuscripts, another edition of the Gospels was also published in 1638, and again in 1665, by Junius and Marshall. These Saxon translations of portions of Holy Writ are most interesting, as showing that from an early date

our forefathers were highly favoured in possessing, to a certain extent, the Word of God in their mother tongue. True it is that but few of the laity, in those days when the people were entirely illiterate, could read it, even when thus translated; but they nevertheless had the privilege of hearing it read and explained by their religious teachers in a language which they understood. Nor did the Church of Rome at this time place any obstacle whatever in the way of vernacular versions of the Bible being made in this and other countries; nor did it take any steps to deprive the laity of the free use of the Scriptures. This was done only at a later period, by decree of the Council of Toulouse, A.D. 1229—a prohibition which was afterwards frequently repeated, in the vain hope of thereby preventing the spread of what they deemed heretical principles and opinions. It was not, however, by such means that the Bible was to become to the laity a book sealed and written in an unknown tongue; for the time was nigh at hand when not only a part, but the whole, of the canonical Scriptures was to be translated into English as it then was spoken and written.

It has been supposed by some that the whole of the books of the sacred canon were rendered into English in the thirteenth century; but this seems so uncertain that we may with great propriety regard the version of the celebrated reformer Wickliffe, "the Apostle of England," as entitled to the claim of priority. In consequence of his ignorance of the original Hebrew and Greek, this translation, which must have been the work of many years, was made from the Latin Vulgate, and was finished about A.D. 1380. From the difficulty attending transcription before the invention of printing, and the consequent high price at which it was sold (the New Testament alone costing a sum equal to about £40 at the present day), it probably had but a somewhat limited circulation at first, though the number of copies was subsequently, at different times, increased by his followers. In the preface, Wickliffe condemned the worship of saints and images, as well as the doctrine of transubstantiation, and exhorted the people to read the Scriptures, which testified so strongly against these corruptions. For this and other reasons, Wickliffe's Bible, from the time of its appearance, seems to have given great offence to the dignitaries of the English Church. At length, A.D. 1390, a bill was brought into the House of Lords for the purpose of its suppression; but through the influence of the Duke of Lancaster and others it was rejected. In a Convocation,

however, which was held at Oxford in 1408, it was decreed that no one should read Wickliffe's book, or translate any portion of the Scriptures into English, which led the way to many individuals suffering persecution, and some even death itself for reading the Word of God in their native tongue.

Wickliffe's version, considering the novelty of the undertaking and his ignorance of the original languages, is, upon the whole, very well executed, and is most interesting, as showing the state of the English language in the fourteenth century. As a specimen, we give a short extract from Matt. v., according to Baker's edition:—"And Jhesus seynge the people, went up into an hil; and whanne he was sett, his disciplis camen to him. And he openyde his mouthe, and taughte them: and seide, Blessid be pore men in spirit; for the kyngdom of hevenes is hereun. Blessid ben mylde men: for thei schulen weelde the erthe. Blessid ben thei that mournen: for thei schal be comfortid. Blessid be thei that hungren and thirsten rightwisnesse: for thei schal be fulfilled. Blessid ben merciful men: for thei schul gete mercy. Blessid ben thei that ben of cleue herte: for thei schulen se god. Blessid ben pesible men: for thei schulen be clepid goddis children. Blessid ben thei that suffren persecution for rightwisnesse: for the kyngdom of hevenes is hern. Ye schul be blessid whanne men schul curse you, and schul pursue you; and schul seye al yvel agens you liynge for me. Joie ye and be ye glade; for your meede is plenteous in hevenes; for so thei han pursued also prophets that weren before you."

There can be no doubt that this version of Wickliffe exercised a very considerable influence upon the minds of many of our countrymen, and so far prepared to pave the way for the Reformation in England. With the exception of a subsequent and more correct translation made by some of his disciples, it continued for nearly a century and a half to be the only English Bible possessed by our ancestors. The opposition of the authorities of the English Church, the high price at which the Scriptures were sold, and the inability of the great mass of the people to read, all combined for a long period to prevent any other translation being undertaken. It was no doubt for these and similar reasons that, though the art of printing was introduced into England about the year 1474, no other version appeared till the spread of the doctrines of the Reformation, when the consequent desire to compare these with the teachings of Scripture rendered a new translation absolutely necessary.

MAKING TOAST.



HO has not done it? At bright fires and dull; with impatient haste, or lingering pleasure; somehow—somewhere—who has not enjoyed doing it at some time or other?

I know who have.

Schoolboys; toasting the bit of supper-bread, till it was beautiful to look upon, exquisite to smell, dainty to crunch.

Little girls; entrusted with the important business of making the toast for mamma, and watching with anxious eyes the delicate brown creeping from up the edges, and spreading along, along, till the whole was covered.

Young folk; having a cosy tea when the servants are out for a holiday, and making heaps of toast for the fun of it.

Old maids; dreaming away the twilight pleasantly over the fire, and holding the toasting-fork as a pretext for watching the pictures in it.

Bachelors? Yes, I've seen them do it when they got a chance in somebody's cosy parlour.

And married men too, down upon their knees on the hearthrug, and glad to be there.

But the children love it best of all. Oh! that delicious roast before the kitchen fire, on a sharp winter morning, when a black frost darkens the windows, and the fire crackles clear, and almost white; the early morning fire, before the ashes have dropped through, or even filled a corner; when the kitchen is innocent of any odour, besides that of the fragrant coffee, just now ready to show its "bull's-eye," in a good old-fashioned manner. Happy the child who can get cook's persuadable ear, when asking, "Please, cook, may I help make the toast this morning?"

It is anxious work, notwithstanding. The solemn charge with which cook puts the toasting-fork into the little hand. "Now, don't you take your eyes off one moment, Master George, or it'll catch."

"She means I'll catch it," murmurs Master George, under his breath, and intent upon his duty he watches, first the steam, such a cloud of it, and then the hollowing of the bread, and then the colour attacking it suddenly, the fire is so fierce.

"Take care of the corners," cries cook; and he does take care, and to his unutterable relief that side is safely finished.

"Done quite beautiful!" says cook, and turns the other side.

But George's good luck deserts him with his steadiness. "Plenty of steam, it can't burn yet," he says to himself, and he takes a good look into the burning depths of the fire. Beautiful, glowing, dazzling, brighter than rubies, changing and melting and there, what is it he sees? A cave? Yes, a jolly

smuggler's cave, with the rocky walls, and rocks for tables, just as he read in Harry's book last night, and the boat drawn up just above high-water mark; and see, right back in the furthest arch of the cave are the casks, five of them, and two men huddled up almost out of sight behind them; in a moment the coast guardsmen will be upon them—and then—

Yes! and then—*It caught!* and cook's nose warned her, and the toasting-fork was snatched away, and Master George ignominiously expelled the kitchen.

And at breakfast papa says, "Really, cook should know how to make toast by this time. It has been burned and scraped again."

Even then mamma would have perhaps persuaded him to put up with a scraped corner occasionally; for somehow she did not mind these stolen visits to the kitchen, or the love the children had for making toast.

The fact is she liked children's toast. Do you know the charm there is for an invalid in a really good piece? If you have never been ill, perhaps you do not. When you are ill, let us hope there will be some one at hand to make it just in the right way, and bring it just at the right time, and you will learn.

Both these things had happened to mamma. Long ago, in a wearisome illness, she lost her appetite completely. Of all the delicate and dainty things made for her, she could scarcely eat any; and the doctor said she could not get better till she took some solid food regularly. Every day she grew more weak and thin, and though she tried each kind of food they brought her, it seemed impossible for her to eat.

It was a very sad time, especially for Annie who was the only girl then, and used to be constantly with mamma. She was kept out of the sick-room, for they said she could do nothing to help; and mamma was really too ill ever to think much about her.

Annie felt so wretched; for you know in almost any sorrow the greatest relief is to be busy, if it be only in *trying* to help, and she was too little for them to think of finding her anything to do.

One day as she was sitting on the stairs, watching the door that she had been forbidden to open, a tray was brought out, evidently untouched; and it came to her mind how once, before mamma was so very ill, she had sent away the tray at tea-time, saying she could not eat, the toast was tough. A happy thought struck her; she ran up to the nursery, and before she was half in at the door began, "I could make some toast, I do believe!"

Nurse was rocking the baby to sleep, but she was very kind, and only held up her finger to warn Annie, while she asked in a whisper, "Why do you want to make toast at this time of day?"

"For mamma," Annie whispered back; "perhaps she'd eat some, if I made it very nicely."

Perhaps nurse thought so too, perhaps she was only glad to find some amusement for Annie, who had abandoned her toys the last few days, but who looked happier and more eager now than she had done since her mamma's illness. Anyhow, nurse let her try, piece after piece, till she was satisfied.

And then nurse had a happy thought: "Suppose we make her some tea in your little teapot."

Annie was in ecstasies. She got a little tray ready, with the tiny milkjug, and two or three lumps of sugar, and her doll's tablecloth for a napkin; nurse carried it down-stairs, and opened the door for her, and gave it her to take in.

She walked so quietly up to the bedside, that mamma did not hear her, or open her eyes; and then in the gentlest, sweetest little voice she said, "Please, mamma, will you try and eat my toast? I think it is nice." Whether it was the surprise or the love, the toast or the toast-maker, who shall say? Certain it is mamma began to get better directly. She only said, "My darling!" But she sat up, and ate every morsel, and drank every drop that Annie brought her.

Every day after that Annie carried in her little tray, till mamma was quite well again; and even then she did not give up her office of toast-maker.

The day papa complained of George's burnt toast, they were telling mamma all about it in the afternoon, and Annie said, "Mamma, do you remember my first piece of toast?"

"I shall never forget that, my child," mamma answered.

"I think it is the very earliest thing I can remember," Annie went on, "sitting on the stairs, and wondering what I could do for you; and then nurse helping me make it, while Harry was asleep in the cradle."

"Yes, you began making toast very early, and I think you have been doing it for some one or other ever since."

"Making toast ever since, mamma! what do you mean?"

Harry looked up from his book to listen, and Nell exclaimed, "Mamma, you do say such funny things! Yesterday you told papa that Annie was your 'right hand,' and now you say she is always making toast."

Mamma said, laughing, "Which two funny things have much the same meaning. Nellie, don't you know how Annie is always trying to help people?"

"Yes, I know that well enough!" cried Nell; "who should know it better than I?" And she jumped up and gave Annie such a hug that she was half strangled.

"But really, mamma, I don't see what that has to do with making toast."

"I consider making toast one of the most important arts in life," mamma said, with a peculiar little

smile, that only touched her eyes and the corners of her mouth.

"Are you in earnest, mamma?" Harry questioned.

"Very much in earnest, Harry," she said. "By making toast, I mean trying to make the dull and disagreeable things of life bright and pleasant. You know how it is with even a dry stale bit of bread, when it is toasted—you would hardly know it for the same, it is so crisp and pleasant to eat."

"Yes, just by putting it before the fire a little. It is very curious," said Georgie.

"And there is a fire we can put many other things before, till they are quite changed; and disagreeable tasks become pleasant occupations; and vexations become delights; and uninteresting work becomes merry pastime."

"Oh! I know. The fire is love," Nell cried.

K. G.

"THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

107. Quote the verse of Scripture in which assertions are made respecting our Lord's incarnation, his existence from everlasting, his supremacy, his Divinity.

108. The writer of one of the Epistles expressly declares God's purpose in translating Enoch.

109. The prophecy of Isaiah, liii. 4, is interpreted in two different ways in the New Testament. Give them.

110. Only one writer in the New Testament uses the word Antichrist, and in two of his books the name does not occur.

111. Give all the names St. John applies to those who deny Christ's humanity or impugn his Divinity.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 239.

91. The first verse of the eighth chapter states that the apostles remained at Jerusalem; again, had he been an apostle there would have been no need for Peter and John to have gone to Samaria to lay their hands on those whom he had baptised. See verses 12 and 13.

92. Epistles to Galatians and Romans. Justification (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

93. "The people believed the Lord and his servant Moses" (Exod. xiv. 31). "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judges vii. 18—20). "The people feared the Lord and Samuel" (1 Sam. xii. 18).

94. "Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them" (Acts xvi. 10).

95. They all stretched themselves on the dead: Christ never did.

96. "The just one." See Acts vii. 52; xxii. 14; James v. 6.

97. Deut. xxi. 23—marginal reading.

98. Matt. iv. 3: 1 Thess. iii. 5.

BIBLE NOTES.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEN LEPERS (Luke xvii. 11-19).

HERE met him ten men." Our Lord in company with a band of his disciples, making his last journey to Jerusalem, met, on entering a certain village, ten men who were lepers. They were afflicted with a loathsome and tormenting disease. Their common misery had drawn them together. It had caused them to forget the fierce national hatred which kept Jew and Samaritan apart.

"*Stood afar off.*" In obedience to the command—"All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Lev. xiii. 46), they "stood afar off." Very pitiable objects these men were, and they knew it, and out of a deep sense of their misery, and with a faith to believe that Jesus Christ would pity them, they lifted up their voices and cried to him for mercy. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They direct their petition to the right person, to the true healer of leprosy, the true physician of human disease.

"*Go shew yourselves to the priests.*" They were bidden to do that which implied that they were perfectly cleansed; to perform a journey which to many would have seemed ridiculous. This answer of Christ involved a trial of faith, but it was a trial the men were able to bear. They must have known that it was no part of the priest's functions to cure them, but simply to declare them cured. Nevertheless, they all went as they were told. They had confidence in Christ to feel that he would not send them on a useless errand. The fact of their complying so promptly is a proof that there was in them the beginning of faith. All obeyed, and in the very act of obedience, they all receive the reward of their faith.

"*As they went, they were cleansed.*" We know not how far they had proceeded on their journey; probably they were out of their benefactor's sight, but at no very great distance from him. What a change for those ten miserable men, all brought about in a moment—all the result of that one prayer, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

"*Glorified God.*" The ten lepers were cleansed; but they did not all give thanks, and yet no men, one would have thought, had more reason to thank God than the nine. One would have thought that the instinct of the human heart would have guided them to the feet of their great Deliverer, to pour forth there their homage and thanks. One would have thought that all would have done precisely that which the Samaritan leper did. But no; one only returned to give glory to God and thanks to his great healer and Saviour. With the conduct of this stranger, in his display of gratitude, we may compare

that of Naaman's the Syrian, who (2 Kings v. 15) besought the man of God to take a blessing at his hand, when healed from a like loathsome disease.

"*He was a Samaritan.*" Nine of the ten on whom mercy was shown carried away the benefit without one grateful acknowledgment rendered to Him who was its author and source. The one who put the rest to shame was a stranger to all the special teaching and privileges of the Jews.

"*Were there not ten cleansed?*" The Saviour, though so accustomed to the ingratitude of those for whom he had done such great things, now marvels. He asks, it well may be in amazement, "Where not the ten cleansed?" This was an actual fact, and however strange it might seem, and however humbling to Jewish pride, yet here was a Samaritan teaching his betters, and nine of God's own people going wrong while one "stranger" to the covenant went right.

"*Thy faith hath made thee whole.*" On him who turned back, fresh blessings were showered down. His act of gratitude is rewarded by the voice of the Saviour sounding in his ears, "Arise, go thy way." In addition to the blessing which reached but to the healing of his body, and which he enjoyed with the ungrateful nine, he, and he alone, receives another and a more enduring one. Do we not, one and all, feel inclined to blame the nine? Had such a blessing been conferred on us, should we have thought any thanks too great? Would not our whole lives have been too short to bless God for his great mercy? Should we have gone away without a word of thanks to God or even to the man who had healed us? We think not; and yet we should do well to remember that those nine lepers were men of like passions with ourselves, and that what they did we, perhaps, might do in their place.

This miracle is intended to teach Christians in all ages, how much they owe to God and to Christ, and how slow they are to acknowledge and pay their debt. No one can say he has nothing to learn from this account. There are two facts prominent in this miracle; namely, that all those who applied to Christ for the healing of their leprosy, were cured, and that only one returned to offer thanks. From this we may learn the universality of God's grace, and the non-universality of human gratitude. Have we pleaded for mercy, and have we obtained it? If so, do we in our daily life show forth our gratitude to God, heartily and in earnest? The leprosy from which we are in common with all mankind suffer is sin, and as lepers were cleansed by the Master, in answer to their appeals, so may we be freed from the dominion of sin, by crying aloud to him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."